A

COMMENT

ON

BOADICIA,

With REMARKS on

MILLS's LETTER.

To which is added,

A PROLOGUE,

To be Spoke at its REVIVAL.

By W. RIDER, A.B.

Late Scholar of JESUS COLLEGE, OXON.

" MODESTE & circumſpecto judicio de tantis viris pronuncian-
" dum eſt, ne, quod pleriſque accidit, damnent quod non
" intelligunt. At ſi neceſſe eſt in ALTERAM ERRARE par-
" tem, OMNIA eorum legentibus PLACERE, quam MULTA
" DISPLICERE maluerim."

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A

COMMENT

ON

BOADICIA.

AS Nature has formed us for Society, and furniſhed us with Affections, which make our Happineſs conſiſt in a Reciprocation of kind and benevolent Offices; it is with no ſmall Reaſon, that we find the [a] ſublimeſt Geniuſes of all Ages paſſionately fond of Fame, and indefatigable

a "Neque enim eſt hoc diſſimulandum, quod obſcurari non "poteſt, ſed præ nobis ferendum: trahimur omnes LAUDIS "STUDIO, & optimus quiſque, *maxime gloria* ducitur."
Cic. pro Archia. §. 11.

"*Good Name* in Man or Woman
"Is the *immediate Jewel* of their Souls."
Shakeſpear's Othello.

to acquire and ſupport their Reputations.—Whoever therefore ſhall make it his Study to depreciate the Merits, to deſtroy the Credit, and ruin the Reputation of a Fellow-creature, ſhould not only be looked upon as an Enemy to the Species, but be eſteemed unworthy of the moſt exalted Title affixed to the rational and ſocial Nature, I mean, HUMANITY. The cenſorious and ill-natured Critick has always been branded [b] *as a Monſter*, with indelible Infamy; while the *good-natured* have been honoured with that Degree of Immortality they laboured to beſtow on others [c]. Hence it is, that ſo much *Veneration* has always been paid to the Writings of *Ariſtotle*, *Horace*, and *Euſtathius*, and ſo much Infamy has always been affixed to the Names of *Therſites*, *Zoilus*, and *Dennis*. Antiquity has enforced this Obſervation by a witty Reſentment, having ranged the applauding Critick among the nobleſt Claſs of Writers, and at the ſame Time aſcribed the Malevolence of invidious Cenſure to the low Genius of a [d] COBLER; for *Caricaturas* are within the Sphere of every little Dauber, but the Head of a *Venus* requires the maſterly Hand of [e] *Apelles*. Had not this been the unvaried Practice of all Ages, the Eſtate of *Letters* would have been very *low* at preſent; for it is no uncommon Remark, that thoſe Perſons, whoſe Works have met with the greateſt Applauſe, were

[b] Ανθρωπόμορφον θηρίον. *Phil. Jud.* Vid. *S. Haſ.* & Wollaſt. *Rel. Nat.* p. 139. Ed. 6.

[c] *Eſſay on Criticiſm*, Verſe 504, *&c.*

[d] *Plin.*

[e] "Poſidonius ſcribit in quadam epiſtola, P. Rutilium Rufum "dicere ſolere, ut nemo pictor eſt inventus, qui Coæ Veneris "eam partem, quam Apelles inchoatam reliquiſſet, abſolveret, "oris enim pulchritudo reliqui corporis imitandi ſpem auferebat."
Cic. de Offic. lib. 3. c. 2.

were always of ſo prodigious a Modeſty, that, had they not been *forced* into the World, they would have lived and died in Obſcurity.

THE preſent Age, however it may have degenerated in other Reſpects, ſeems to maintain its Dignity, and vie with Antiquity in this amiable Qualification. Every new Perſonage that has trod the Stage, has met with an Approbation equal to his moſt ſanguine Expectations; and our *Politeſſe* ſeems to have been puſhed ſo far, that a bare *Attempt* to pleaſe has very often been honoured as if it were actual Deſert. Thoſe who have cultivated *Dramatic Poetry*, have, generally ſpeaking, met with as much Encouragement as *they* could think they merited. But, I could wiſh that this Conduct had been without *Exception*, and that one, whoſe private Character ſteals the Applauſe of every one, had met with that Approbation from the Public, as a Dramatic Writer, which a Piece of ſo finiſhed a Kind not only *deſerved*, but ſeemed to *claim*.

THE *French*, who rival us no leſs in Works of *Literature* than in *Commerce*, have always acknowledged *our* Writers equal to their own in *Genius*, though inferior to them in *Regularity*; and, to puſh this boaſted Advantage as far as they could, have always, in their Criticiſms on our Writings, laid ſo much Streſs on the *Conformity* to *Rules*, as to repreſent the Advantages of *natural Parts* of no Significancy. [f] 'Tis with this View, that our immortal *Shakeſpear*'s *Deviation from Rule* has always been the favourite Theme of the *French Critic*,

 while

[f] The Letters of *le Blanc* and *Voltaire*'s Preface to his *Merope*, *Zaire*, and *Semiramis*, are flagrant Inſtances of this *Injuſtice*.

while his inimitable Beauties have been paſſed by unnoticed.

As Regularity and Delicacy of Taſte are then the only Points in which the *French* Stage could claim an Advantage over us, that Perſon, who ſhould endeavour to introduce them on our Stage, ſhould by every *Engliſhman* be eſteemed a Friend to his Country; for by thus heightening the Character of our Dramatic Poetry, he at the ſame Time aggrandizes that of the Nation. The general Invectives that have been caſt on our Taſte, have indeed been ſuch as are defenſible upon no other Grounds, than the noble Characteriſtic of our Nation, an *invincible* LOVE OF LIBERTY; and this Reaſon ſeems to be alluded to by the beſt Poet, and beſt Critic this Age has produced, in theſe Lines:

" The *Rules* a Nation born to *ſerve* obeys,
" And *Boileau* ſtill in Right of *Horace* ſways;
" But we, brave *Britons*, foreign Laws deſpis'd,
" And kept *unconquer'd* and *unciviliz'd*;
" Fierce for the *Liberties* of Wit, and bold,
" We ſtill *defy'd* the *Romans*, as of old."

Eſſay on Criticiſm.

OUR moſt celebrated Pieces have been accuſed of the greateſt Abſurdities, and the very Exhibition of them eſteemed a Matter of Wonder. The Comic Strokes in our Tragedies have afforded no ſmall Employment for the Gall of Satire, their Violation of Probability have been a copious Field for Criticiſm, and the ſavage Scenes that have employed our Performers, have been conſtrued not only into a general Reflection of the Want of Taſte in the Audience, but made the Grounds of making Cruelty

Cruelty one of the Characteriſtics of the Nation. Our Love-ſcenes have been eſteemed *fulſome*, our Actions epiſodical, our Characters outrageous, our Cataſtrophe's ſhocking. The Duration of our Action has likewiſe furniſhed Grounds for *Reflections*, and the Violations againſt all the Unities imputed to us as the Height of *Ruſticity*. Our Poet being convinced that theſe *Invectives* were not without Grounds, and that, as long as they ſubſiſted, our Character, as Dramatic Writers, muſt be very low in the Eyes of Foreigners, has ſet himſelf to wipe off theſe Aſperſions; and, by conforming to the Rules of the Ancients, has ſhewn our Enemies, that their ſo much applauded Regularity was at the Option of every *Briton*, who would *ſtoop* to it. To this let me add, in the Words of no deſpicable Writer, "[g] If the judi- "cious *Voltaire* were to criticiſe it, he would allow "this Production to be *conformable* to his own "*Delicacy* and *good Senſe*, and deſerving a Place "amongſt the *beſt modern Tragedies*."

If the perpetual ſhifting of Scenes, and tranſporting us in one Moment a thouſand Miles, and the next a thouſand more, while we are conſcious we have not moved from our Seats, be reckoned an Abſurdity, 'tis an Abſurdity which the Author of *Boadicia* has avoided, by confining the Scene of Action to one Spot before the Tent of *Dumnorix*; but as ſeveral Incidents fall out during the Action, which would not be proper to introduce on the Stage, and though performed out of the Spectators View, yet neceſſary to be known, the Poet has, with ſingular Addreſs, preſerved the *Unity of Place*, by bringing them ſo near the Scene of Action

[g] *Gray's-Inn Journal*, No. 11.

Action as to be ſeen by his Heroes, and by them related to the Audience; and in this Reſpect he has obſerved the Rule of the *Roman*,

——— " *Multaque tolles*
" *Ex oculis, quæ mox narret facundia præſens.*"
HOR. A. P.

I might add, he has *adorned it!* for as the very *Eſſence* of Dramatic Poetry is *Action*, every Thing ſhould be *active* in it; and our Author has not *barely related* theſe Circumſtances, which the *Ancients* generally do, but, by repreſenting his Heroes as *ſeeing* them at the very Time they ſpeak of them, he gives them a Degree of *Life* that a ſubſequent Relation cannot claim, and makes the Audience almoſt Spectators of the Incidents.

BUT while we are thus doing *Juſtice* to the Merits of the Author, we may be told that his Play is *deficient* in a very *material* Point, and that a *capital* one too; that is to ſay, it has *no Intrigue:* " For without an *Intrigue*, a Play would be but a " bare *Dialogue*, or Set of Dialogues." Theſe are the Words of a Gentleman who has appeared as an Antagoniſt to our *Author*; and as they contain in them all that is ſaid in the remaining Pages, I hope he will think it no Neglect if we paſs by ſome Inaccuracies which make him more deſpicable in the Eyes of the World as a *Grammarian*, than all his *Irony* can make Mr. *Glover* as a *Dramatic Writer*. 'Tis no Wonder that this Gentleman ſhould not have been able to diſcover a Plot, when, at his firſt ſetting out, he entirely miſtakes the very *Deſign* of the Piece. " What I ſuſpected, ſays he, " at the very Beginning of the Play, *viz.* that " the

" the *Romans would have conquered the* Britons, " was what really happened; I preſumed ſome " Incidents might have intervened, to have ren- " dered the Cataſtrophe dubious." But if we will credit our Author the *Deſign*, or *Moral* of the Piece, was the " *fatal Fruits of Strife*;" and if we take this as a Key, we ſhall find an Intrigue worthy of the Author. The Action of the Play is the Diſcord between *Boadicia* and *Dumnorix*, who is for revenging herſelf on that Chief for oppoſing her Intentions to ſacrifice the *Roman* Captives. The Efforts the Queen makes to revenge herſelf on *Dumnorix* for his Poſition, and thoſe that are made by the other Perſonages to quell her Anger, are what form the Plot; and as the Mind is uncertain whether the oppoſing Parties can prevail on the Virago to be reconciled, the Suſpence which we are under, during theſe Circumſtances, may be a ſufficient Vindication of the Intrigue from the Charge of too much Sameneſs. Thoſe who inſiſt upon a *Variety of Incidents* to *entangle* the Mind, and perplex the Underſtanding, ſhould be informed, that as the inculcating *ſome* uſeful Truth is the Deſign of the Poet, the more he keeps *that* in the Eye of the Audience the better he effects his Deſign, and the more *lively* will the Impreſſion be. The Stagyrite has told us, that there are two Species of Fable, one of which is ſimple, and the other implex; as the former is *moſt natural*, and has the Countenance of ſeveral of the *greateſt Dramatic* Writers among the *Ancients*, it ſhould, I think, want nothing to recommend it to our Approbation; but thoſe, who, notwithſtanding, will confuſe theſe different Species together, and draw the Sword of Cenſure againſt our Author from thence, deſerve nothing but Ridicule

dicule from their Readers, and Contempt from the *Literati*.

I AM ſorry to have ſpent ſo much Time on this Criticaſter, when I recollect that the *Author* of a FEW REFLECTIONS had given him ſufficient Information in this Point, and had anſwered all that he could object *before* he ſat him down *to write*. The Objection he makes to the Title of the Play, is of the ſame Kind with that he has made to the *Plot*, and equally betrays his own *Ignorance*; but as the inimitable *Shakeſpear* words it, let him "*hoiſt with* "*his own Petar*.—It is uſual, ſays he, to denomi- "nate a Play from the principal Character in it." The firſt Scene *Boadicia* appears in that Light; in the fourth, *Dumnorix* owns her ſo; in the ſeventh, the Charge he gives *Venuſia* to appeaſe her, is a Confirmation of it. In the ſecond Act, where *Venuſia* undertakes her Office as a Suppliant, is ſhe not proved ſtill more ſo? In the fifth Scene, *Ænobarbus*'s Speech ſtill repreſents her in this Light. In the third, when *Ænobarbus* ſays,

——————If *Boadicia*
Return once more, our Deſtiny is fix'd.——

How can we help eſteeming her as a chief Perſon? When *Dumnorix* comes with Standard, does he not own her ſuch? In the third Scene, we ſee her ſtill in this Light; in the fourth ſhe appears the ſame; but it would be tedious to cite more Paſſages. Let theſe ſerve as well as thoſe *uncited*, to ſhew, though we do not ſee *Boadicia* in every Act, we hear of her in every Scene, and hear her always mentioned as the Chief of the Drama.

It would be needleſs to mention the Addreſs of the Poet in avoiding the grand Crime which the *French* object to us, of admitting Murders on our Stage. It would be impertinent to obſerve how religiouſly he has abſtained from that vicious Uſe of *Simile*, which our Poets are ſo fond of on every Occaſion, and which the *French* juſtly condemn as improbable and abſurd.

But though the Poet has ſubjected his Genius to *Rule*, he has not fettered it; his Delicacy has not been productive of Coldneſs; his Correctneſs has not cramped his Invention; nor his Veneration for the Stagyrite reſtrained his Muſe from ſoaring to the Regions of the *true Sublime*. To convince ourſelves of this Truth, let us attend to thoſe Beauties of Diction of Sentiment and Elocution, which, like the Conſtellations of Stars that compoſe the Milky-way in the Skies, pour on the Mind one uninterrupted Emanation of Luſtre, and affect the Soul with an inceſſant Exerciſe of Admiration. The Character which ancient Hiſtory delivers us of *Boadicia*, is preſerved throughout this Piece with ſo great an Uniformity, that there is not *one Expreſſion* affixed to her Part which is not ſuitable to a Perſon of her Diſpoſition, nor is there one Sentiment given her by the Author, which would become the Mouth of any *other* Perſonage. The Cauſe of that Boiſtrouſneſs, in which ſhe terrifies us, is equal to the Effect; and when we hear the Detail ſhe gives us of her Injuries ſhe received from the perfidious Barbarity of the *Romans*, are we at all ſurprized at her inſatiable Thirſt of Revenge? When in Anſwer to the *Roman*'s Declaration of War ſhe replies,

We are prepar'd.
Come from your Hills, ye fugitive Remains
Of ſhatter'd Cohorts by their Fear preſerv'd.
Th' embattled Nations of our peopled Iſle,
Yet freſh from ſev'nty thouſand ſlaughter'd *Romans*,
Shall add yon Refuſe to the purple Heap.
And yet amid triumphant Deſolation,
Though Flames each *Roman* Colony devour,
Though each diſtracted Matron views her Infant
Graſp with its tender Hands the piercing Spear,
Though your grey Fathers to the Falchion's Edge
Each feeble Head ſurrender, my Revenge
Will pine unſated, and my Greatneſs want
Redreſs proportion'd to a Queen's Diſgrace.

Do we not admire that Height of Soul which has always characterized our Nation, and that Courage untamed by Oppreſſion, for which Foreigners have ſo juſtly admired and applauded the *Engliſh* Name. I need not point out to you the happy Choice of Epithets that occur in this Paſſage, or the Aſſemblage of Ideas which progreſſively excite, encreaſe, and confirm our Terror. In the fourth Scene, when in Oppoſition to *Dumnorix*'s ſetting the *Roman* Captive free, ſhe breaks out,

What do I hear? A *Britiſh* Chief's Command?
Whoe'er unchains a *Roman*, on Mankind
Lets looſe Oppreſſion, Inſolence and Rapine;
Sets Treaſon, Falſhood, Vice, and Murder free.

The paſſionate Abruptneſs of the firſt Line is ſo ſtrong a Mark of a Temper, exaſperated by unheard-of Injuries to Revenge, ſo expreſſive of the violent Spirit of the Virago, that it gives us no

no ſmall Idea of the Poet's Knowledge of human Nature; and the Climax in the three laſt Lines has ſuch a near Relation with the Heroine's perſonal Afflictions, that the Poet's Addreſs ſeems to be no leſs admirable.

If from *Boadicia* we turn our Eyes to the fair *Venuſia*, how is our Soul divided by a Conflict of Paſſions? In the one we cannot but applaud a noble and a juſtly warmed Reſentment; in the other, we cannot but approve of the milder Temper of Forgiveneſs; and the Contraſt, in which the Poet has introduced theſe two oppoſite Diſpoſitions, is ſo judicious, that we cannot but admire his Addreſs, and extol his Judgment. No Painter has ever mingled Light and Shade with more Advantage, nor in an hiſtorical Piece introduced a Group of Figures, where they ſhould better ſerve to reflect Beauties and Glories on one another, when *Venuſia* ſays,

Of all the Paths, which lead to human Bliſs,
The moſt ſecure and grateful to our Steps
With Mercy and Humanity is mark'd.
The ſweet-tongu'd Rumour of a gracious Deed
Can charm from hoſtile Hands th' uplifted Blade,
The Gall of Anger into Milk transform,
And dreſs the Brows of Enmity in Smiles.

How does the Heart yearn over every Syllable! Is not every Breaſt intereſted in Behalf of her Plea? Is not every Soul an Advocate in her Behalf? With what a Softneſs do the Lines flow, what a Smoothneſs is in every Verſe, and what a beautiful Choice of Epithets appear throughout the Whole! What a fine Oppoſition is raiſed between the Gall of

Anger and Milk, between the Frowns of Rancour, and the Smiles of Mercy! But the Fineneſs of the Sentiments is not all that is to be admired, the Appropriation is not leſs charming. Had it been in the Mouth of *Boadicia*, it would have been forced and unnatural; it would not have been conſiſtent with the unpoliſhed Majeſty of *Dumnorix*, nor would have been agreeable to the falſe Magnanimity of *Ænobarbus*, or the leſs alarming Fortitude of a *Flaminius:* But with what Addreſs is it introduced in the Character of the mild, the ſoft, the affectionate, the delicate *Venuſia?* If I recollect, the great Father of the *Engliſh* Dramatic has likewiſe thought fit to put a Speech on the ſame Topic in the Mouth of a Female, in his *Meaſure for Meaſure*; and with great Propriety: For if we conſider, that the ſofter Affections characterize that Sex, who ſeem to be ſent into the World on purpoſe to ſoften the ruſtic Bravery of our Sex, and by communicating their Delicacy to the human Species, to render them as much like to the Female Race, as the Female Race reſembles the Angelic. Let thoſe, who repreſent our Poet's Lines unadorned, conſider this Speech with Impartiality, it is ſufficient to convince them of their Miſtake, and to free him from a Foible, which they are pleaſed to miſcall a Perfection. Thoſe who can peruſe the paſſionate Speeches of *Boadicia*, without profeſſing that there is Spirit and Fire in our Poet's Lines, muſt reflect upon themſelves the very Defect which they would affix on the Author, that of being too cold. Thoſe again, who accuſe him for too great a Sameneſs, ſeem not to underſtand what is Variety, or not to have attended to the different Conflicts which the Rage of *Boadicia*, the Softneſs of *Venuſia*, the calm Fortitude of *Dumnorix*,

Dumnorix, the romantic Bravery of *Ænobarbus*, the rational Calmneſs of *Flaminius*, alternately raiſe and deſtroy. Did conjugal Reproof ever ſhow itſelf in more amiable Terms than thoſe which *Dumnorix* makes Uſe of in this Paſſage:

Tell me, thou lovely Coward, am not I
As terrible? Or falls the *Roman* Sword
On the tough Buckler, and the creſted Helm
With deadlier Weight, than mine? Away and fear not;
Secure and calm, repoſe thee in thy Tent;
Think on thy Huſband, and believe, he conquers;
Amid the Rage of Battle he will think
On thee; for thee he draws the martial Blade;
For thy lov'd Infants gripes the pointed Aſh.
Go, and expect me to return victorious;
Thy Hand ſhall dreſs my Wounds, and all be well.

THERE is ſuch a noble Sentiment couched in the two laſt Lines, that I think cannot be rivalled by any but thoſe that immediately ſucceed.

Fear not. I tell thee, when thou ſeeſt my Limbs
With Duſt beſpread, my Brows with glorious Sweat,
And ſome diſtinguiſh'd Wound to grace my Breaſt,
Thou in the Fulneſs of thy Love ſhalt view me,
And ſwear, I ſeem moſt comely in thy Sight.
Thy Virtue then ſhall ſhew me worthier of thee,
Than did thy Fondneſs on our nuptial Day.

WHAT a Sublimity is couched in theſe few Lines! How does the Warrior dignify the Lover! How does the Courage of the one rival with the Affection of the Huſband! How great does the Contempt of Danger appear, when we conſider that the

the Warrior can ſpeak of his Dangers without the leaſt Terror, and looks on all his impending Diſtreſſes as Glories! Muſt we not be apt to conclude, that as no Hero ſeems to have feared Danger leſs, or to have loved his Wife more, that he is in this Reſpect a true *Briton*. But if we admire *Dumnorix* in this Speech, how muſt we applaud him in that which concludes the firſt Act. Addreſſing himſelf to his Men, he ſays,

You, Warriors, deſtin'd to begin the Onſet,
My *Tribonantians*, it is Time to ſeek
Th' embattled Foe. And you, all-judging Gods,
Look down benignant on a righteous Cauſe!
Indeed we cannot give you, like the *Romans*,
A proud and ſumptuous Off'ring; we abound not
In Marble Temples, or in ſplendid Altars:
Yet though we want this vain, luxurious Pomp,
Rough though we wander on the Mountain's Head,
Through the deep Vale, and o'er the craggy Rock,
We ſtill demand your Favour; we can ſhew
Hands, which for Juſtice draw th'avenging Steel,
Firm Hearts, and Manners undebas'd by Fraud.
For you, my dauntleſs Friends, what need of Words?
Your Cities have been ſack'd, your Children ſlain,
Your Wives diſhonour'd: Lo! on yonder Hills
You ſee the Spoilers; there the Ruffians ſtand:
Your Hands are arm'd; then follow, and revenge.

The affectionate Addreſs with which this Speech opens is beautifully interrupted with an Apoſtrophe, that breathes ſuch a noble Idea of the Divine Attributes, and ſuch a magnanimous Conſciouſneſs of meritorious Virtue, that our Souls ſeem to be

be upon the Stretch to entertain an Idea worthy of the inimitable Hero. And the Return to his Soldiers, after this beauteous Apoſtrophe, ſavours ſo much of the Warrior: The Arguments made uſe of to inſpire their Courage are ſo well choſen, follow ſo cloſe together, and are urged ſo conciſely, that they ſeem finely adapted to the martial Character: But what Force do they receive, when he ſeems to break off in the Middle of them, and in a Tranſport points to the very Perſons he is endeavouring to exaſperate them againſt. This unexpected Turn muſt certainly fire, not only his Soldiery with an impetuous Reſentment, but even make the very Audience cry out, FOLLOW and REVENGE.

LET us attend to the Speech of *Ænobarbus*, to the Expoſtulation of his Friend *Flaminius*.

I am thy Friend,
And I will make a *Roman* of thee ſtill;
But let me ſee no languiſhing Dejection
More on thy Brow, nor hear unmanly Sighs.
Gods! Can'ſt thou dream of Love? When yonder ſee,
The *Roman* Legions, all array'd for Battle,
Are now deſcending; ſee their dreaded Eagles,
Their dazzling Helmets, and their crimſon Plumes:
A Grove of Jav'lins glitters down the Steep;
They point their Terrors on th' aſtoniſh'd Foe;
Soon will they charge the *Britons* in the Vale,
And with th' auſpicious Glories of this Day
Enrich the Annals of imperial *Rome*.
O curſt Captivity! with double Weight
I feel thee now! malicious Fate! to ſuffer
A *Roman* thus to ſtand confin'd in Bondage,

And

And ſee the Triumphs which he cannot ſhare.
By Heav'n, *Flaminius*, I will never bear it.
Where is thy *Briton?* Will ſhe lead us hence?
Elſe, by the God of War, unarm'd I ruſh
To join the glorious Scene, which opens there.

THERE are ſuch a Complication of Beauties in this Paſſage, and ſuch a true Sublimity breathes itſelf in every Sentence, that I am at a Loſs for Words to expreſs the Idea it conveys of the Poet's Genius. My Boſom feels ſuch a Variety of Motions, while my Pen travels through each ſucceſſive Line, that I deſpair of doing Juſtice to the Author. Almoſt all the Graces of the Sublime ſeem to be amaſs'd in this Speech. The ſudden Interrogation, the Change of Perſons, the unexpected Tranſition which *Longinus* recommends as eſſential to Sublimity, mutually aſſiſt and enoble one another. The Deſcription of the diſtant Battle is ſo exact, that even in the very Cloſet we become Spectators of the Fight: But when we hear the Exclamation of, O curſt Captivity! Does not our Soul at once ſtartle at, and applaud the *Roman*'s Magnanimity? The Apoſtrophe to his Friend adds Fuel to the Fire he had raiſed in the Breaſt of every Spectator, and prepares us ſo well to receive his Reſolution in the concluding Verſe, that our Fears perſuade us that he ſhould ruſh unarmed to join the glorious Scene.

THE Poet ſeems to have ſtretched his Imagination ſo much in this laſt Speech, that one would be apt to think it impoſſible for him to keep up the exalted Character he has given us of *Ænobarbus*.

BUT it is not the Nature of *his Fire* to grow *dim*; it glows intenſely through the whole, and rather ſeems to *increaſe* than to *diminiſh* its Splendor. Let the following Speech in the Third Act be a Confirmation of what I aſſert.

O *Mars* and *Veſta!*
Is it a Viſion, which you raiſe before me
To charm my Eyes? Behold a Scene, *Flaminius*,
To cheer a *Roman* in the Gaſp of Death.
The *Britons* are defeated; look, *Flaminius*;
Back from the Vale in wild tumultuous Flight
Behold their Numbers ſweeping tow'rd the Hill;
Already ſome are ſwarming up its Side
To reach their Camp for Shelter; pale Diſmay
With hoſtile Rage purſue their broken Rear,
While Maſſacre, unchidden, cloys his Famine,
And quaffs the Blood of Nations. O in vain
Doſt thou oppoſe thy Boſom to the Tide
Of War, and brandiſh thy recover'd Standard;
Vain is thy animating Voice to thoſe,
Whom Fear makes deaf; O *Dumnorix*, thy Toils
Are fruitleſs, *Britain* in [h] the Scale of Fate

D Yields

[h] This is a beautiful Alluſion to the moſt ſublime Paſſage that occurs in the three great Maſters of Epic Poetry. *Homer* in his *Iliad* is a cloſe Imitation of the MENE TEKEL in *Daniel*.
His great Copyiſt *Virgil*'s runs thus:
" Jupiter ipſe duas æquato examine *lances*
" Suſtinet, & fata imponet diverſa duorum:
" Quem damnet labor, & quo vergat pondere lethum."
ÆNEID xii. 725.
Milton's, which is introduced with more *Addreſs* than either of the *preceding*, ſeems to be more *peculiarly* alluded to by our Author.
Th' Eternal ——————————
Hung forth in Heav'n his golden *Scales*,
—————— In theſe he put two Weights,
The Sequel each of parting, and of Fight;
The latter quick flew up, and kick'd the Beam, &c.
Paradiſe Loſt, Book iv. Ver. 1000.

Yields to the Fate of *Rome*. No, Life, farewell:
Shine on, bright Phœbus, thoſe, who reſt behind
To ſhare thy Splendors, while I ſink in Darkneſs,
Are far beneath my Envy; I reſign
Theſe Eyes with Pleaſure to eternal Shades,
They now have ſeen enough.

If we now envy the *Romans* the amiable Light in which the Poet has ſet their Courage, 'tis Time to conſider the Character of *Dumnorix* and *Venuſia*; and we ſhall be convinced, as a periodical Writer informs us, "That the Author's Intent in raiſing "our Ideas of the *Roman* Virtue ſo high, was on-"ly to raiſe thoſe of the British ſtill *higher*."

This appears very conſpicuouſly in the following Speech of his to *Boadicia*.

——Heavenly Rulers!
How have the *Britons* merited this Shame?
Have we with fell Ambition, like the *Romans*,
Unpeopled Realms, and made the World a *De-*
ſart?
Have we your Works defaced; or how deſerv'd
So large a Meaſure of your *bittereſt* Wrath?

From *Dumnorix* let us turn our Attention on *Venuſia*'s Addreſs to her Siſter.

Look on a *proſtrate Siſter!* Think, thou hear'ſt
Our *Children*'s plaintive Notes enforce my Pray'r,
And *Albion*'s Genius mix his ſolemn Moan;
That Lamentations through thy Ears reſound
From all the Wives and Mothers of thoſe Thou-
ſands,

Whoſe

Whoſe Limbs lie ſtretch'd on yonder Fields of
Death ;
Thoſe wretched Wives and Mothers, oh! reflect,
But for the fatal Diſcord of this Day
With other Looks, with other Cries and Geſtures,
With diff'rent Tranſports, and with diff'rent
Tears
Might have receiv'd their Sons and Huſbands
Home,
Than they will now ſurvey their pale Remains,
Which there lye *mangled* by the *Roman* Sword
To feed the Raven's Hunger—yet relent!
Yet let reſtoring Union cloſe our Wounds,
And to repair this Ruin be thy Praiſe!

SUCH Motives as theſe, one would be tempted to ſay with *Dumnorix*, "No Cruelty could hear unmov'd." There is ſuch a Pathos breathes through the Whole, that the Peruſal melts the Heart, and fills the Eyes. The Topics made uſe of are ſo well adapted to the Female Character, ſo well choſen, riſe on one another with ſo much Advantage, and are ſo beautifully contraſted, that we cannot help exclaiming, that a Poet, who is ſo true a Repreſenter of the *Yearnings* of a *Wife* and a *Mother*, muſt himſelf deſerve no ſmall Applauſe in his Character as a *Huſband* and a *Father*.

LET this ſerve as a faint *Specimen* of the *Beauties* which occur in this *regular* Piece; and while it excites our Admiration, let it encreaſe the Shame of its Adverſaries. To copy *all* its Charms, would be to tranſcribe the *whole* Piece; to produce all its Virtues, would be *endleſs*. But as it has been the Intent of this Comment to take Notice not of thoſe Paſſages which have been commended by

others, which would be needleſs, but of thoſe which ſeemed moſt proper to *oppoſe* to the *popular Objections*, ſo, as *they* are ſufficiently refuted, to *proceed* in the *Comment* would be entirely *unneceſſary*.

If I ſhall have engaged any Perſon, by what is offer'd, to change his Sentiments in Behalf of *Boadicia*, I ſhall think myſelf ſufficiently recompenced for my Trouble; and if I am ſo happy as to prevail on the Public to demand its *Revival*, I propoſe the following Piece for that *Occaſion*.

PRO-

PROLOGUE.

AT once to blunt the Edge of *Gallic* Rage;
To *raiſe* our Merits, and *reform* our Stage,
To borrow Graces from the *Grecian* School,
And teach the *tragic* Muſe to walk by RULE;
Our Poet ſtrove,—bold Taſk!—but ſtrove in vain,
And where he ſought to pleaſe, he met *Diſdain*.
Sir *Nykin* knows not aught of tragic Laws,
But to *diſſect* his dreadful Wit he draws.
" Methinks, my *Duck*, this Piece is much too cold,
" The Thoughts are flat, and — and the Queen
" too bold."
This whiſper'd he that faithful Judge — his *Wife*,
The Joy, the Bane, the Treaſure of his Life:
But let me dare inform the *doating* Elf,
She *owns* a *Boldneſs*.—Where?—Why, in *himſelf*.
Stop—who alarms us there with *critic* Thunder?
'Tis no leſs Wight than noble Teague *O' Blunder!*
His monſtrous Hands three dreadful Catcalls hold,
Plain are his *Pockets*, but his *Cloaths* are *Gold*:
" By *Chreſht*, my *Honey*, doſt thou think it right,
" That we ſhould *ſhee* all Murders *out of Sight?*
" That *Blood* ſhou'd *flow*, and *not a Drop* be ſhed,
" Nor *Boadicia tell* us ſhe is *dead?*"———
Sir, *Nancy* in the front Box feeds his Noſe,
The Star of *Belles* and Oracle of Beaus.

" Stap

" Stap me, Sir *William*, if this *Raſcal*'s Play
" Has not quite chas'd my *Gaieté* away:
" Rough is his *Taſte*, his Poetry is rough,
" And the whole Piece is damn'd romantic Stuff.
" What Huſband now of *Taſte* adores a *Wife?*
" What Woman for her *Spouſe* wou'd *quit* her
" Life?
" What Mother will her Quality diſgrace,
" To plant *ſtale* Virtue in her future Race?
" My Sentiments, Sir *William*, to declare,
" I think the Poet is *trop viſionaire.*"
But Cenſure to the Gall'ry ſoaring ſtrays,
All Fools can *blame*; ſince Wiſdom dwells in
Praiſe:
No *Ghoſt* attracts their never weeping Eyes,
No Murders *charm*, no Outrages ſurprize;
Us'd at *one Glance* a thouſand Leagues to roam,
One Scene confines the *ſtruggling* Soul at Home.
Well might theſe Critics call the Author Fool,
Whoſe greateſt Joy is not to judge by *Rule.*
Such was the Fate our modeſt Poet found,
Cypreſs, not Bays, his bluſhing Temples bound.
The Critic too with you hath taken Part,
And plung'd the Steel of Rancor in his Heart.
But, *Britons*, once more view the tragic Store,
Explore its Merits, and its Charms explore;
Revive the drooping Poet with Applauſe,
Give Joy to Worth, give Strength to tragic Laws;
Gallic ſhall then with aching Boſoms view
Her greateſt Glories far ſurpaſs'd by you;
And your Stage boaſt the Critic's fam'd Deſire,
A RACINE'S *Judgment* join'd with SHAKESPEAR'S
Fire.

FINIS.